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Contents

OUR INTERVENTION IN LOCAL 15

- submitted by W. Brown
Edmonton Branch

THE PROBLEM OF THE TROTSKYIST YOUTH PRESS

- submitted by I. Angus
Toronto Branch

THE PRESS -- WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE PRESENT DISCUSSION?

- submitted by Zane Boyd
Toronto Branch

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OUR INTERVENTION IN LOCAL 15

by W. Brown

The writer of this article became involved in the activities of Local 15 in 1964. During the postal strike of 1965 involving B.C., Ont. and Quebec the writer along with other militants in the local called for a special meeting to discuss joining the strike. The leadership resisted our demand until we put enough pressure on them through phone calls to their homes. After two days they conceded the point and arranged a meeting. Although most of us were strangers to each other this elementary tactic had caught on enough to succeed at that time.

The meeting was noted for the fact that not a single motion was permitted from the floor. It must be remembered that at this time most of us were baffled by parliamentary procedure. Each time one of us attempted to place a motion calling for a strike vote we were ruled out of order.

At the next meeting a few days later three of us showed up with copies of Bourinot's Rules of Order (the book used by most Canadian unions including ours). To ensure that the leadership got the point they were met at the door as they came in and made aware of the fact that we had these books. We then sat in the front row and checked the moves of the table. Out of this came the formation of a loose caucus which would take the leadership of the local four years later after learning some lessons in the intervening period.

Although more meetings were held during the period that the Montreal locals were on strike our local never went out. By the time we had the second meeting both Vancouver and Toronto had returned to work. At the second meeting we lost a strike motion by 6 votes out of over six hundred attending. At the third meeting we finally managed to win a strike motion but only Montreal was still on strike and the executive managed to stall it until Montreal had returned to work.

The next elections in the local took place in 1967 and in that election the leadership was replaced. This leadership while sounding more militant than the previous one turned out to be opportunistic. They made the fatal error of not building a base and the President of that slate is now President of the supervisors union. The secretary and the Vice President are both on the eligible lists to become supervisors now. They had earlier been voted out of office by the membership at the instigation of the loose caucus earlier mentioned which was becoming stronger as time progressed.

In 1968 occurred the first national postal strike co-ordinated by the national leadership, rather than a spontaneous action as had happened in 1919, 1924 (both of which were in the west) and the previously mentioned strike of 1965. I began the strike as a picketer and ended up a member of the Central Strike Committee due to pressure from the ranks.

On my way into a meeting one evening I ran into a comrade selling Workers' Vanguard. The headline "France Workers Power" caught my eye and I bought a copy. I had a conversation with the person selling the paper because this was my first encounter with the radical press. He invited me to a forum on Czechoslovakia which was coming up in a couple of weeks. The reason for mentioning this particular forum no doubt came about because we had touched on this subject in our brief conversation. I arrived at the forum about an hour-and-a-half early due to a mix-up in times on my part. This was my first introduction to Trotskyist literature and the time went by very fast. I also obtained my first sub to Workers' Vanguard at that forum. I raise this point now because I want to deal latter with the power of the press.

Elections of 1969

In the spring of 1968 the local started a newsletter called The Carriers' Quill. With the encouragement and co-operation of the T.U. Co-ordinator at the time I began to write articles for the paper in the fall. Since January of 1969 these articles have been on a consistent basis every month without fail. This led to another situation.

I mentioned earlier that a loose caucus had been functioning within the local. During the fall of 1968 and early part of 1969 a good deal of pressure was applied to have me run for a leadership role in the local in the 1969 elections. This occasioned a large amount of discussion in the movement both for and against the move. The pressure from within the local was very great and in the end the options were reduced to running for the position on a program or losing the respect of the militants on the ground that we were all talk and no action.

We wrote up a leaflet calling for increased participation of the membership in the affairs of the local, an increased numbers of stewards, political action on the part of the local. All of these points have been implemented since then. I asked the stewards to distribute this leaflet in their stations. My request was met with enthusiastic response and all the stewards co-operated. The ensuing meeting had the largest turnout of any meeting since the strike of the previous year. The election was won by a two-to-one margin over the incumbent.

The local elects its executives on a split basis. Half one year and half the next year. This meant we did not have a majority. This was overcome by having members of the caucus raise points from the floor. These positions had been worked out in meetings at someone's house between the executive meeting and the membership meeting. Needless to say the membership was much farther to the left than the leadership. In 1970 we managed to get a majority on the executive and are strengthening that position on a continuing basis.

Political Action

I have previously mentioned the GUILL. This has proved an excellent educational tool. As an example, when first elected to a leadership position within the local the local made decisions to support other people because of one of two reasons. Either the group had previously given us support or another local had already voted assistance to the group. In other words the local played a secondary role to other locals and did not initiate actions on its own. This of course resulted from the lack of leadership in the past and a lack of understanding on the part of the membership. This policy is still followed by almost all other trade union locals in Edmonton including the Canadian Union of Postal Workers local (our other local in the post office) and by most union locals across the country.

By using the GUILL to explain the importance and significance of this type of activity and by providing the leadership we have seen the local support the Native People boycotting the Cold Lake School, The National Farmers Union boycott against Kraft, although the issue has not been brought to Edmonton by the NFU as yet, and most recently the rank-and-file moved a motion to send a speaker to the Suffield protest. This came from the membership because the request from the Suffield Coalition was received after the executive meeting and was read to the membership as information without a recommendation but with the provision for action if the membership so desired.

In addition of course the leadership has always taken the position that the membership should make decisions based on discussion and not blindly follow other unions just because they are unions without questioning the decisions of those unions. We have functioned with the understanding that we must solidarize with the struggles of other workers and oppressed peoples. Interestingly enough at the meeting that the Suffield protest was supported the executive had recommended rejection of an appeal from the Salvation Army. This appeal had been supported by the Labour Council while the Suffield action had been rejected. In our local just the opposite happened and on the initiative of the rank-and-file. In addition that meeting also referred back to the executive a motion that was not properly researched by the executive and for which the executive did not have sufficient answers. I think from this we can safely say that the educational program carried out through the GUILL has been successful.

Increasing the Effectiveness of the Stewards

In 1970 we began preparing for the coming struggle with the boss by increasing the number of stewards and by carrying out an educational program in the GUILL. In 1969 when I was elected there were ten stewards serving a membership of about 400 working in nine postal stations and the main. As the executive so proudly stated there was one steward for each station. This was probably satisfactory twenty years earlier

when Edmonton was still small. We decided to increase the number of stewards to at least one steward per twenty members. We did not intend to limit ourselves to this however and where circumstances permitted it we obtained additional stewards beyond this ratio. The final figure was about twenty-five and we have managed to maintain at least twenty stewards ever since. This figure has increased on occasion around struggles then drops back to the solid number.

These extra stewards were soon to prove their worth. Shortly after we had increased the steward body, within a week or so, they were called upon to stage a "study Session". This decision had been made by the stewards at a meeting which adjourned about 9:30 PM Monday evening. By 7:15 AM the next morning almost six hundred postal workers were assembled at the Union Centre. This action had caught the bosses completely off guard and it was a couple of days before they recovered. Certainly for the first couple of hours, until the press found us, the bosses had no idea of what had happened. Because a strike vote was scheduled to begin at noon only the midnight and day shifts were involved. Regardless of the lack of involvement of the afternoon shift the vote was 85% in favor of strike action and only Vancouver with 87% had a larger strike vote amongst the larger cities. Certainly coming from the conservative prairies this was impressive and another example of the correctness of our program.

During the summer of 1972 we have begun a new campaign to once again increase the size of the steward body. This time we are working on the idea of one in ten in preparation for the coming struggle with the boss. At the end of June this campaign had increased the number of stewards to 35 and we are confident of having 50 by fall. The membership of our local is approximately 500. To the best of my knowledge no local in Canada including Montreal or Toronto have anywhere near fifty stewards. Montreal has about five times the membership of Edmonton and Toronto has about four times as many.

Strikes Rotating and Otherwise

These stewards play a key role in the event of a strike by organizing the picket lines at their respective stations. The main picket line consisting of around twenty-five pickets is situated at the main post office. The secondary picket lines at the postal stations are limited to about four or five at a time. The stewards prepare picket lists of the members in their areas. During rotating strikes all the members must be called. They are called after supper the day before a strike in order to minimize the possibility of a leak. The press has never given a clear picture of just how devastating these strikes were to the big businesses but it can well be imagined that it was sufficient. The rotating strikes also require a tremendous amount of discipline. To be able to pull people off the job for periods of 24 or 48 hours and then send them back to work requires tremendous co-operation on the part of the membership. It is much easier for them to just shut the operation down and wait for the boss to make a move.

However they have no strike fund and probably could not hold out for four or five months as they did in the rotating strikes. Information was reproduced and distributed to all members as soon as possible after it was received. This also helped to keep morale up. The stewards were key in getting this information distributed. A good example was the list of cities on strike any given day. Each morning this was phoned to all stations and one of the stewards there copied it down to place on the bulletin board. This was done just before coffee time and the phone was a signal for the members to take a coffee break and get the latest info. Needless to say there was no work done until everyone had finished this chore.

Last fall there was a crisis in eastern Canada in the Niagara peninsula. We kept in touch with the situation and had a total of seven steward meetings within a fourteen day period. An indication of the attitude of the stewards to their role is the fact that during this intensive period of activity (even for politicals it would be considered intensive and these stewards' only involvement so far has been in the local) there was neither complaints nor stewards missing from the meetings. Once again I think this demonstrates their attitude towards their role.

Involvement in the NDP

When I joined the NDP in 1968 I was the first letter carrier in Edmonton to take out a membership. Since that time I have been able to sign up fifteen members. We experienced some red-baiting from another area of the country through a whispering campaign and countered this with an article in the WILL. We pointed out that this was happening and suggested that the people concerned should attempt some concrete political activity instead of slandering those that are involved. We used the example of the NDP convention at which I was the only delegate from the postal unions as a method of positive action in getting publicity for our grievances.

Again we experienced some redbaiting from some of the supervisory staff through the use of the word comrade. This was taken up by the editor of the WILL in an article and for a month or so after the article appeared all members were calling each other "comrade". So much for that attempt at baiting. Since that time we have not been bothered by any attempts and probably will not be for awhile ~~at least~~ people forget the lessons previously taught to them.

The Attempted Transfer of a Comrade

In the late fall of 1970 one of our comrades in Toronto applied for a transfer to Edmonton. The post office rejected this on the grounds that this brother had abused his sick leave. The brother filed a grievance and in addition we took the matter to our membership. They instructed us to do everything possible to win the transfer for the brother in question. This issue then became a major one for local 15 in the spring of 1971. For a period of eight months this issue was raised at every executive and

membership meeting. Most of the time the question came from correspondence or reports from the executive. Occasionally the executive would fail to report anything mainly because nothing new had happened since the previous meeting. On those occasions and I think there were two or three during the eight month period someone would raise the question from the floor. The matter was dropped by the local after eight months because we were informed that the comrade involved wished to drop the matter. Experience in Edmonton has taught us that we can win most battles in the end if we persevere long enough. There is also some question of how much the Toronto local involved its membership in the issue. At one point the membership of local 15 was posing a strike over the right of a brother to transfer from one area to another. This was centered around this comrade's attempt to transfer. The matter was only dropped because of the aforementioned withdrawal on the part of the member involved.

Organizing the Couriers

This spring the local was called upon to organize the truck drivers that the post office was taking over. Unlike Toronto and other areas where the truck drivers had previously been organized, the drivers in Edmonton had never been in a union. The union employs full time organizers called District Representatives. The one for our area, after pressure had been applied by the local on the national executive, finally came to town to organize the drivers. Unfortunately for us during the four days he was in town there were hockey games two nights. As a result we only saw him on two of the four nights he was in town. The local then hired an organizer who had previously been an organizer for Mine Mill and was presently a member of the Steelworkers Union. Part of the problem of this organizing was the fact that we had a jurisdictional dispute with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers over who would represent the truck drivers. We established two person organizing teams consisting of stewards who volunteered their time for the task.

For the first three weeks the work was very discouraging and only about twenty of the hundred drivers had been signed up. However during this period we managed to keep our teams going and in fact get some new faces out. Then one night one of the teams discovered a driver who had a grievance. This driver had already joined the other union but they had told him he couldn't win. There was three weeks pay involved and we promised to attempt at least. The next morning we had won the pay and the word spread very fast. Within the next two weeks we had signed up 40 more couriers and now have about eighty. There only remains getting the last few. The next task is integrating these new members into the activities of the local. In addition to getting new stewards we also have elected one of their number to a new position as a table officer. It should also be pointed out that the organizer hired for this purpose happened to be a comrade who had been around the local. The idea of hiring the comrade came from another member of the executive and met instant approval from the executive most of whom knew him. He has been at both steward and membership meetings since, with the full approval of the

membership, even though he is not a member of the union.

Educational Seminars

The labor council puts on seminars twice a year on various topics such as stewards, communications, parliamentary procedure, etc. We encouraged the members to go to these courses and at the last one had 30 out of the 400 members present in various courses. Our numbers have been constantly increasing at these seminars since I was first elected when there were only four of us including myself. A comrade from Toronto gave the course on communication at one of these seminars.

This spring the labor council decided not to hold a seminar. So we decided to hold one under the sponsorship of the local. We chose the topic of workers control and invited an MLA from Manitoba plus the educational officer of CUPE 1000 to participate. This seminar lasted all day Saturday and most of Sunday. An interesting phenomenon took place. About 4:30 PM the chairperson announced the time expecting that people would like to leave for supper. However no one made a move and in fact the discussions continued until past six. Besides members of the local there were people from 10 other unions and associations there including a number of comrades. The speeches were taped and we have had numerous requests for copies of the tapes from militants.

THE ROLE OF THE QUILL (Quill)

I mentioned earlier that I wanted to deal with the power of the press. During the period preceding the 1970 strike we published on a monthly basis items concerning wage settlements by other unions in various areas of the country, other struggles of workers and generally awakening the fighting spirit amongst the membership.

We have always insisted on the editorship of the paper being a separate position. Over the past few years numerous local papers have appeared on the postal scene and disappeared again. The only one that has appeared every month during that period including the times we were on strike is the QUILL. Other papers have tended to degenerate into one man shows such as the Courier of Local 12 in Vancouver or the Golden Horseshoe in Hamilton. Other papers such as the Falcon from Winnipeg and the Local one news of Toronto have only printed what the executive wanted printed. On the other hand the editor and for the last two years the two editors (one from each union) have been free to print any point of view. It should be noted that although we have comrades in other locals only one in Vancouver wrote on a consistent basis for the union press. We must use the press more in the future as it is an excellent method of educating the membership to our program and probably one of the most effective. An indication of how widely read by the membership the QUILL is comes from the fact that we consistently get phone calls the day after we mail the paper out from members who have not received

their copy. A further indication comes from the topic of conversation on the day following the GULL being received by the membership. They are all talking about one or more articles contained in that issue. They don't always agree but at least they are reading about our ideas.

Our work in the local has produced some contacts none of whom we have yet recruited. However in the past few months two of our stewards have consistently attended forums and have also been out to Suffield meetings. As well they both attended the Workers Control seminar and both have subs to Labor Challenge. We are hopeful of recruiting both of these by fall.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TROTSKYIST YOUTH PRESS

by I. Angus, Toronto West Branch

The proposal to cease publication of Young Socialist has been raised formally in the discussion bulletin (see "Our Press" by B. Belfont, Bulletin No. 4) and informally by a number of comrades. The proposal is, in my view, an incorrect, even dangerous, means of dealing with the problems involved in putting out a revolutionary press in Canada.

(To say, as Comrade Belfont does, that the proposal is not to "dump Young Socialist" but rather to "merge" Young Socialist and Labor Challenge, is simply playing with words. In fact the paper when produced would be under the political direction of the LSA -- thus the proposal is to abandon the independent youth publication.)

What the comrades who propose this do not seem to realize is this: every argument they raise against a separate youth paper is also an argument against a separate youth organization, unless they see this step as a temporary, short-term action designed to ease the YS/LJS through a difficult organizational or financial problem. In fact, the arguments raised against keeping a youth paper call into question the entire concept of a youth radicalization, which is in any way distinct from the general radicalization of the working class and other social forces.

The comrades also do not present any indication of how the Young Socialists, deprived of a voice of their own, will appear as anything other than, at best, a "youth auxiliary" of the LSA.

What is the problem?

The comrades who advocate a single paper make a number of important points about the difficulties our two publications currently face. They point out that the two papers cover much the same material, that having two papers limits our ability to sell either one with the result that both suffer circulation losses, that students are willing to buy Labor Challenge, and so on. The most telling argument seems to be that the task of Labor Challenge is to provide political direction for the entire movement, but with two papers, YSers tend not to read or use Challenge.

In essence the problem is this: rather than complementing each other, Young Socialist and Labor Challenge are, at present, parallel publications. The only clear demarcation between the two papers is that Challenge is published more frequently, is better written and covers a wider range of material than the YS.

This is not a new problem, but there is no reason to think that it is inevitable. However, it must be solved.

As long as Young Socialist continues to seem like a junior Labor Challenge, there is no justification for its existence. One only has to look at the two papers to see the problem. Both comment on all the major events of the day. In the case of the recent Cherry Point oil spill they carried the same photograph and markedly similar articles, for example. During the war measures act crisis both put out special issues with substantially the same material. And so on. The articles which give Young

The Problem of the Trotskyist Youth Press --- 2

Socialist its distinct character as a youth paper -- the reviews, interviews with young activists, and so on -- are usually in the back pages, if they get in at all.

(To avoid pointless dispute, let me point out that this is not invariably the case now, nor has it always been true. Between 1963 and 1965, Young Socialist Forum directed itself clearly and capably towards radicalizing youth, and in no way conflicted with the Vanguard. In mid-1971 Young Socialist was moving towards a more clearly youth orientation. And some issues and some articles still reflect the necessity for a distinct youth paper. But the general orientation of the paper is towards being a junior edition of Labor Challenge.)

The movement has tended to solve the problem of two similar, parallel newspapers in the simplest way possible -- members of the YS do not read, use, or sell Labor Challenge. Except for the period of the last subscription drive, York University was probably unique in its sales of Labor Challenge.

Such a situation is, in the long run, intolerable. The movement devotes substantially more resources to Challenge than to Young Socialist. For the youth not to use it is a complete waste. More -- it means the youth is denied the political guidance of the League in the most concrete form.

To decide to drop the youth paper to solve the problem is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The task is not to abolish the YS. The task is to create a youth paper.

For a youth paper

It is true, as the advocates of a single paper say, that there is no hard and fast dividing line between campus and off-campus issue. The NDP, the abortion campaign, anti-imperialist sentiment, and the antiwar movement all cross the line. This underlines the absolute necessity of selling Labor Challenge on campus, because Labor Challenge is the voice of our movement on these issues.

But this is only part of the story.

There are many questions which concern students only, or at least primarily, including such issues as fees, discipline, campus democracy.

There are many cultural, educational and general questions which have far more importance to radicalizing youth than to other sections of the population. The John Lennon-Yoko Ono interview is an example of a subject which properly belongs in a separate youth paper. Similarly, the youth paper must deal with the wide variety of general questions about socialism and capitalism which constantly reappear among radicalizing youth. (eg violence, religion, overpopulation, democracy, individual liberty,)

Most important of all -- the comrades who propose dropping the youth paper completely ignore the millions of high school students who ought to be one of our principal concerns.

The Problem of the Trotskyist Youth Press --- 3

It would be completely false to say that Labor Challenge, or any paper geared to the radicalization as a whole, could adequately serve the high school radicalization. In fact, it seems unlikely to me that many of the issues of Young Socialist published in the past school year can have been of much help to comrades in the high schools, or in recruiting high school students.

The audience at which a youth paper must aim is not the narrow layer of radicalized university students, but the broad mass of radicalizing youth in the high schools and the universities (especially in First Year). It must always be borne in mind that Labor Challenge is also available to our contacts -- in fact that we should insist that they read it. -- so it is not necessary for the youth paper to say everything, or even to deal with a majority of the big debates on the left. The YS/LJS must be geared to using Labor Challenge, especially towards extending our campus readership.

At the same time, Labor Challenge must become more useful to the youth movement. As a monthly publication, Young Socialist is prohibited from intervening in the week-to-week struggles on campus. But Labor Challenge is not. Challenge must appear as the voice of Trotskyism on campuses, covering the big struggles, publishing statements of the YS/LJS and so on. Challenge must give substantially more coverage to the activities of the YS/LJS.

The Young Socialist must be more of a youth magazine. In fact a change to a magazine format should be considered as one step in making the youth publication complementary to Challenge. Its task should be to deal with the questions which are distinctively issues in the youth radicalization.

The relationship between the two newspapers ought to be the same as the relationship between the two organizations. Labor Challenge, like the LSA, is the authoritative voice of Canadian trotskyism. It has the responsibility of leading the whole movement. The YS is defined by the Youth-League Relations document as an "organizationally independent" part of a common movement with the LSA. Emphasizing the commonness of the tasks of the papers, and their separate responsibilities within the framework of those common tasks ought to end the conflict between them.

-July 26, 1972.

THE PRESS -- WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE PRESENT DISCUSSION?

By Zane Boyd, Toronto

Any decision on the future of the youth press must start with the reality of the youth radicalization. It is this reality that demanded the organization of an independent revolutionary socialist youth organization. That same reality makes a press -- one specifically oriented to the youth radicalization -- a top priority not only of the youth organization, but of our entire movement. The last thing we can do is to approach this matter from some superficial, transitory organizational considerations.

Why has the Canadian Trotskyist movement seen it necessary thus far to have a separate youth publication? Without its own paper, would the YS/LJS have been able over the past decade to build itself into a viable and influential organization of youth rooted in the student milieu? Would it have been able to effectively intervene in the various issues, debates and struggles that have involved student youth in recent years? Hardly. Ever since the YS was founded back in 1960, the independent youth paper has been central to the life and growth of the youth organization. Through it, the YS has kept its finger on the pulse of the growing radicalization, following and participating in every new development. The Cuban revolution, the ban-the-bomb movement, the Black Nationalist movement, Vietnam, Quebec, women's liberation -- in all of these cases, it was students who were first and foremost to move out in protest, and the YSF or the Young Socialist was there. Now, when the radicalization is beginning to move more into the high schools, there is loose talk about dropping the youth paper.

In his contribution to the discussion, Comrade Belfont raises a series of important questions that touch on the very nature of the youth radicalization and the whole basis for an independent organization as well as a separate paper. He asks why it is that the LSA/LSO - YS/LJS is unique in the Fourth International in publishing two papers in the same language. He might also have asked why the Canadian section, together with the SWP - YSA, is alone in having a separate youth organization. Both questions touch on the same problem -- our view of the youth radicalization, and the need for a separate student strategy.

Belfont asks why the youth radicalization needs its own paper. After all, he says, we don't have separate Trotskyist publications for the antiwar movement, women's liberation, the Black and Chicano struggles in the U.S. and the Native movement in North America. He continues: "What then is the role of the Young Socialist paper? Is it true that college and high school students and working youth need their own paper? Do they radicalize around unique issues that must be treated in a separate way?" Here is the nub of the whole question, not only as far as the role of the paper is concerned, but the role of the independent youth organization itself as well.

For it is our analysis that the youth radicalization is a special phenomenon in itself, with its own particular causes, its own expression and its own dynamic. It is not simply like the radicalization of distinct social sectors such as women, Blacks, gays, etc., but in fact encompasses these groups and movements within it. It has a broader, a more general scope and character.

It is not an innovation to treat youth in this special way, but classic Leninism. It is classic Leninism for youth to have their own revolutionary organization, and in addition, their own revolutionary press. Marxists have traditionally viewed youth as a social layer in transition, as yet not firmly rooted in society. Youth are particularly concerned about the future. They are looking for answers and for fundamental changes in the status quo, rapidly coming to radical conclusions. Critical, skeptical, and anti-authoritarian in their outlook, they come to socialism in their own way and through their own experiences.

Added to this traditional concept of youth, traditional among Leninists is our Trotskyist understanding of a new phenomenon -- the new and massive student radicalization, arising out of the tremendous expansion of education in recent years on the one hand, and the growing crisis of the capitalist system on the other. Youth are not simply youth, but students in their vast majority, having a common particular environment and common concerns.

Comrade Belfont says that youth do not radicalize only around youth problems such as coercive rules in the high schools and tuition costs in universities. This is true; and yet they do radicalize around these issues, and what's more, struggle as much and often more around these issues as around the broader social issues. They are, after all, students, and their radicalization takes place within the context of the schools and universities, thus taking on a student expression. Even as far as these other questions like Amchitka, Vietnam, abortion, etc. are concerned, it isn't just that youth radicalize as well around these issues, but radicalize in particular and as students around them, and must therefore be given particular attention.

It is in recognition of the specific character and the scope of the youth radicalization and its independent expression as a student movement that the YSLJS is constituted as an independent organization. We are out to win student youth to socialism through their own particular experiences, through building a massive and independent student movement in this country, united around our student strategy and program. It will continue to take a separate youth paper to achieve this aim, just as it will continue to take an independent youth organization.

It has been argued by comrades that student youth are just as interested as everyone else in the NDP, the Waffle, the labor movement -- issues which the Labor Challenge covers in considerable depth. They say that Labor Challenge is just as saleable to students as to anyone else. If that's the case, then why have a youth movement at all? Why not recruit ^{youth} directly to the LSA/LSO? No one has actually suggested this in the present discussion. But this is where the logic of this argument and dumping the Young Socialist leads to.

How many students however are actually interested in these issues? A relatively small number -- primarily persons of some sophistication, persons who have already had some previous experience in radical politics and who for one reason or another are now interested in what we Trotskyists have to say. It is largely this radical student left who we sell Labor

Challenge to on campus as opposed to the Young Socialist. But these persons constitute a very small percentage of radicalizing student youth. It is mistaken and dangerous to measure the political level of students by these radicals with whom we are involved on some campuses in internal disputes and sophisticated theoretical debates. The vast majority of students know nothing about Trotskyism as opposed to other radical tendencies, nor particularly care. Our task is to win these youth to the basic ideas of socialism and to the challenge of building a revolutionary student movement, something that can be accomplished only with a separate publication aimed at this broad layer of youth, their needs and concerns. On many campuses and in practically every high school, radicalism is not organized and we find ourselves in a strategic position for winning youth directly to our movement, virtually uncontested. The Young Socialist is our best tool in this situation. It is the only radical student paper. Only recently has the Communist Party attempted to move back into this arena. Other socialist tendencies are not at all oriented to students, but are on a workerist binge. The NDY does not exist as a cross-Canada organization and has no press. Our press puts us in a unique position.

What the proposal to discontinue an independent Young Socialist reflects is a disorientation from this basic task, a disorientation arising from the current lull in the student movement. Is it conceivable that this merger proposal would come up in the midst of sustained student struggles in the high schools or on the campuses? Hardly, The YS/LJS would be intervening more vigorously than ever with its paper, giving ongoing direction to these struggles and popularizing more than ever the ideas of socialism. The proposal reflects the pressure to abandon our broad student orientation and to adapt instead to the narrower campus left. In the meantime, however, the radicalization expands and deepens, particularly in the high schools.

It is not simply the future of the Young Socialist and the orientation of the YS that is at stake in this discussion, but that of Labor Challenge and the LSA as well. For, in merging the papers, not only would the Young Socialist be eliminated, but the entire character of the Labor Challenge would have to change as well. In trying to encompass the youth radicalization, the new paper would no longer be able to effectively perform the function of the present Labor Challenge -- that of addressing itself to the particular needs and issues of concern of worker militants and activists in the NDP. The effectiveness of the Labor Challenge, with its long-standing tradition as an influence in the CCF-NDP left, would be weakened.

Comrades must appreciate that politically, there is a profound difference between the youth and adult milieu. Youth are radicalizing rapidly. Youth struggles are mainly of a spontaneous and explosive character, with the issues quickly jelling, where everything seems up for grabs, and with the struggles quickly consuming themselves. Our intervention must be rapid and bold in order to have any influence and in order to recruit.

In the adult milieu, on the other hand, which isn't caught up in a profound radicalization like that of the youth, our political intervention must

necessarily be of a more patient, long-term character, in which we gradually build up our influence among militants and radicals with whom we often work for a considerable period of time.

This difference between the youth and adult milieux and our different approach with each of them points very clearly to why we need separate movement publications.

So far, we have approached the question of the press entirely from the important political considerations involved rather than organizational ones. However, let us examine in their own merit the organizational considerations that some comrades have raised.

Behind the merger proposal is in part an attempt to overcome much of the difficulty we now have in putting out two papers -- the problem of "over-extension" of ourselves, as Comrade Belfont puts it -- shortage of skilled writers, staff and personnel, financial difficulties, problems of circulation, etc. Perhaps if we combined the whole operation, we would eliminate or at least lessen the burden. What's more, we would then be able to move towards having a weekly. So the argument goes.

Actually, however, none of the present problems would be solved by a merger; in fact, only new difficulties would be created.

The problem of circulating our two papers, and particularly the Young Socialist, are not the result of their content, which is fine as a whole, but of an inadequate appreciation of the importance and different functions of each publication. It is primarily a problem of confidence in our ideas and a lack of a common understanding of the different basic objectives of our two organizations -- a problem which the conventions of our movement can help remedy.

What about staff and personnel? We would still find ourselves short of these. A merged publication, after all, would have to be of an expanded character, and that demands more writers and personnel. It is misleading to think that in combining the papers, we would be carrying out a simple addition of staff and personnel; actually, we would be fusing the two operations into a single editorial board and production team still necessarily of limited size, perhaps with a couple of youthful additions, but making correspondingly more decisions and proofreading and editing correspondingly more articles. And deadlines would still be deadlines.

A big disadvantage would be suffered in the loss of an important training ground for young comrades that now exists in the separate publication of the Young Socialist. The experience comrades have gained in writing, editing and publishing their own paper up to now has been key in the development of cadre in our movement. Just take a look at the present leadership of the LSA/LSO.

What about the proposal for a weekly? While this might be generally desirable, at present it is simply beyond the resources of our movement.

We have enough difficulty as it is putting out and circulating a biweekly Labor Challenge. Publishing and circulating a weekly would create impossible demands on our already strained organization. We would have to spend almost every ounce of our energy trying to circulate the paper, which would put our other political responsibilities in jeopardy.

But do we in fact need a weekly in the first place at this time? And given the terrific strain a weekly would place on our movement and its resources, there would have to be some awfully important political considerations for having one. There is at present, however, no significant turn of events that would suggest doubling the frequency of the press. A bi-weekly Labor Challenge can now adequately cover the events and developments it must for our present purposes. It may well be desirable to enlarge the paper at present in order to provide fuller coverage and increase the paper's attractivity with more reviews and articles of a more popular character. But this in no way should require dumping the Young Socialist, which for us is a political necessity. (Nor, for that matter, should eventually having a weekly.) Expanding the paper should come about through improving the circulation and sub base of both papers.

More important than a weekly at the present time is a theoretical journal of the movement. This is how we are going to meet our opponents on the left and establish ourselves as the Marxist-Leninists. At a time when there is such a growing interest in radical and Marxist theory, and with the growing disaffection of large numbers from reformism, Stalinism and Maoism.

In summary then:

The Young Socialist as a separate publication is indispensable to the YS/LJS and its independent student strategy. To give up the youth paper would be to throw into question the viability of the YS/LJS as an independent organization, to sap its vitality and sense of purpose, and to threaten to liquidate it altogether. The merger proposal reflects a political disorientation stemming from the current lull in the active student movement and the pressure to adapt to the radical campus left.

A merger would decisively alter the character of Labor Challenge and weaken the ability of the LSA to appeal to trade union militants and NDPers and to carry out its work within the labor movement and the NDP.

A merger is not necessary for the sake of Liberation and our movement in Quebec.

A merger would not overcome current difficulties in putting out and circulating both papers; only new difficulties would arise.

A weekly, while perhaps desirable, is not particularly necessary, nor is it feasable at this time. The theoretical journal is a priority.

Addendum submitted after document printed.

See page 5 -- last sentence of paragraph before summary -- Maoism, ...

the need for the journal takes on special urgency. It would enable us to take up in depth the various issues in debate on the left in this country -- something which neither Labor Challenge nor the Young Socialist is able to do adequately. Even more important, the journal would force our own movement and its cadre to come to grips with the need to develop its theory and analysis, both in the sphere of Canadian and Quebec history and politics and on the international plane. It would structure this need of our movement. Furthermore, publishing a quarterly would place no great demand on our movement (as compared with putting out a weekly Labor Challenge). The present staff would be well able to handle the four or five articles required every three months. What's more, there are comrades whom we are recruiting across the country who are able and experienced enough to meet this need.

One other argument which has been put forward in favor of a merger of the papers is that we must consider the needs of Liberation. In the abstract, the thought is a good one. And if our movement in Quebec and its paper were in serious difficulty, we might actually have to consider something drastic to remedy the situation. In reality, however, no one in Quebec has spoken of such a situation, much less suggested that an expansion or improvements in Liberation be made at the expense of the youth movement in English Canada and its paper.